

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 AID-05 NEA-10 /081 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5167

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 5161

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: RABBI ROSENTHAL'S VISIT TO URUGUAY

REF: STATE 242489

1. SUMMARY: RABBI MORTON ROSENTHAL, LATIN AMERICAN DIRECTOR OF THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE (ADL) RECENTLY MADE A VERY SUCCESSFUL THREE-DAY VISIT TO URUGUAY WHICH EMBASSY BELIEVES CONTRIBUTED TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS HERE. SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF ROSENTHAL VISIT WERE (1) A FRANK EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES WITH HIGH-LEVEL GOU CIVILIAN OFFICIALS AND THREE MILITARY COMMANDERS IN CHIEF (2) A BETTER UNDERSTANDING BY ROSENTHAL OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN URUGUAY WHICH HE CAN SHARE WITH OTHERS IN U.S. CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEM; (3) A JOINT MEETING OF LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS AND U.S. AND ISRAELI AMBASSADORS AND THEIR TOP STAFF WITH ROSENTHAL TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION AND (4) AN EXCELLENT AND VERY EDUCATIONAL ROSENTHAL BRIEFING OF MISSION STAFF ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ACTIVITIES OF
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PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS FIELD. END SUMMARY.

2. RABBI MORTON ROSENTHAL, ADL DIRECTOR FOR LATIN AMERICA, VISITED URUGUAY OCTOBER 16-20. ROSENTHAL, A FLUENT SPANISH SPEAKER, AND A WELL INFORMED AND HIGHLY ARTICULATE ADVOCATE OF AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS AND POLICIES HAD AN EXCELLENT VISIT WHICH WE BELIEVE CONTRIBUTED TO OUR

HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS HERE.

3. DURING A 45-MINUTE MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ROVIRA, ROSENTHAL EXPLAINED SPECIFIC CONCERN OF ADL TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM STATING THAT THIS WAS NOT CONSIDERED A PROBLEM IN URUGUAY. THE ADL HAD RECEIVED ONLY A FEW ISOLATED COMPLAINTS OF MISTREATMENT OF JEWISH PRISONERS WHERE ANTI-SEMITISM WAS SUSPECTED, BUT WAS REASONABLY SATISFIED THAT THIS WAS THE WORK OF LOW LEVEL OFFICIALS WHICH WAS NOT CONDONED AT HIGHER LEVELS. ROVIRA, A FORMER AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL, ASSURED ROSENTHAL THAT THE GOU STRONGLY CONDEMNED ANTI-SEMITISM AND WOULD PUNISH ANY OFFICIAL GUILTY OF SUCH ACTS, WHICH SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY BROUGHT TO THE GOU'S ATTENTION. ROSENTHAL THEN MOVED TO THE CONCERN OF THE ADL, OTHER PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IN GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN URUGUAY, EXPRESSING THEIR HOPE FOR POSITIVE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION. ROVIRA RESPONDED RATHER NEGATIVELY WITH THE FAMILIAR GOU LINE. URUGUAY HAD FACED A MAJOR TERRORIST-SUBVERSIVE ASSAULT DURING THE TUPAMARO PERIOD WHICH FORCED IT TO TAKE DRASTIC MEASURES TO PROTECT ITSELF. THE THREAT CONTINUED AS DID SOME OF THE MEASURES BUT THE GOU HOPED TO RETURN TO NORMALCY AS SOON AS CONDITIONS PERMITTED. UNFORTUNATELY THE U.S. AND OTHER TRADITIONAL FRIENDS DID NOT UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THIS AND WERE MISINFORMED BY A MASSIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMUNIST-TERRORIST-SUBVERSIVE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST URUGUAY WHICH THE GOU LACKED THE RESOURCES TO COMBAT. THERE WERE NO "POLITICAL PRISONERS" IN URUGUAY BECAUSE ALL PERSONS WERE DETAINED FOR COMMON CRIMES. WHEN ROSENTHAL QUESTIONED THE ASSURANCE OF NO POLITICAL PRISONERS A LONG AND NOT VERY FRUITFUL DISCUSSION ENSUED DURING WHICH ROVIRA ARGUED LEGALISTICALLY THAT NATIONAL SECURITY OFFENSES WERE COMMON CRIMES. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH NEITHER PARTY SIGNIFICANTLY THE VIEWS OF THE OTHER THE DISCUSSION WAS CORDIAL AND FRANK AND WE BELIEVE ROVIRA DID GAIN AN IMPRESSION OF THE DEEP CONCERN AND ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF OF PRIVATE ENTITIES SUCH AS THE ADL IN HUMAN RIGHTS. END COMMENT)

4. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MEETING WITH ROVIRA, ROSENTHAL, ACCOMPANIED BY THE DCM AND ACTING DAO, MET FOR ONE HOUR WITH ARMY CINC VADORA, AIR FORCE CINC PALADINI, NAVY CINC MARQUEZ AND JOINT STAFF (ESMACO) CHIEF SANGURGO. ALTHOUGH THE MEETING COVERED MUCH THE SAME SUBSTANCE AS WITH ROVIRA, THE DISCUSSION WAS MORE ANIMATED (BUT CORDIAL) AND ALL THREE CINC'S ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED. THE CINC'S REITERATED THE GOU'S STRONG OPPOSITION TO ANY ANTI-SEMITISM AND THEIR

DISBELIEF THAT ANY GOU OFFICIAL WOULD COMMIT ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS. WHEN ROSENTHAL NOTED THAT LOCAL RABBIS DID NOT VISIT JEWISH PRISONERS, GEN. VADORA EXPRESSED SURPRISE TELLING ROSENTHAL THAT RABBIS HAD AN OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE MORAL SUPPORT TO THEIR FOLLOWERS AS DID THE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CLERGY AND STRONGLY URGED THEM TO VISIT ALL JEWISH PRISONERS. ROSENTHAL PROMISED TO PASS THIS MESSAGE TO THE RABBIS, AND SUBSEQUENTLY DID. WHEN GENERAL PALADINI CHARGED THAT U.S. CONGRESSMEN PUSHING PUNITIVE LEGISLATION AGAINST URUGUAY WERE EITHER PAID BY THE COMMUNISTS OR DUPED BY THEIR PROPAGANDA, THE DCM INTERVENED TO DENY THIS. THE DCM SAID CONGRESSMEN BASED THEIR ACTIONS ON THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION IN URUGUAY SUCH AS THE CLOSURE OF CONGRESS, THE STRIPPING OF THE JUDICIARY'S INDEPENDENCE, THE CENSORSHIP
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OF THE PRESS, THE SUSPENSION OF HABEAS CORPUS AND NUMEROUS REPORTS OF MISTREATMENT OF PRISONERS. THIS SPARKED A VIGOROUS DENIAL THAT THE JUDICIARY WAS NO LONGER INDEPENDENT BECAUSE THE ACTIONS TAKEN WERE MERELY ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND THE CHANGE FROM A "SUPREME COURT" TO A "COURT OF JUSTICE" WAS ONE OF NAME ONLY. ADMIRAL MARQUEZ ALSO DEFENDED THE

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ACTION ARA-14

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RECENT ACTIONS AGAINST THE NEWSPAPER EL DIA AS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY SINCE THE HONOR OF THE ARMED FORCES HAD BEEN OFFENDED. (COMMENT: IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THIS RARE TURNOUT OF ALL THREE CINC'S TO RECEIVE A NON-OFFICIAL VISITOR WAS USEFUL. IT ENABLED THEM TO HEAR OUR HUMAN RIGHTS MESSAGE FROM A PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZEN AND FORCED THEM TO DEFEND SOME OF THEIR ACTIONS. RABBI ROSENTHAL ALSO VIEWED GENERAL VADORA'S INVITATION TO URUGUAYAN RABBIS TO VISIT PRISONERS AS PARTICULARLY POSITIVE. END COMMENT)

5. RABBI ROSENTHAL'S CALL ON JUSTICE MINISTER FERNANDO BAYARDO BENGUA, ACCOMPANIED BY POL SECTION CHIEF, WAS FUNDAMENTALLY AN EXERCISE IN EVASION AND LEGAL HOP-SCOTCHING BY THE MINISTER. ROSENTHAL QUESTIONED BAYARDO CLOSELY ON AMNESTY PROVISIONS OF THE PRESENT LAW AND PROPOSED REVISIONS TRANSFERRING THE AMNESTY POWER TO THE EXECUTIVE, THE LOSS OF INDEPENDENT POWER BY THE JUDICIARY, THE MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM, TREATMENT OF PRISONERS, AND THE PERCEIVED CURRENT LEVEL OF SUBVERSIVE THREAT. BAYARDO, HIGHLY NERVOUS AS ALWAYS, LARGELY AVOIDED CONCRETE ANSWERS AND SOUGHT REFUGE IN FLIGHTS OF LEGAL RHETORIC AND LENGTHY DISCOURSES ON EVER-CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENT SUBVERSIVE DANGERS. ASKED TO SEEK INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION OF SPECIFIC PRISONERS OF INTEREST TO THE ADL, HE DEMURRED, INDICATING THAT HE HAD NO AUTHORITY TO REQUEST SUCH INFORMATION. (COMMENT: THE VISIT WAS THE LEAST REWARDING OF ROSENTHAL'S OFFICIAL CALLS. END COMMENT).

6. ON THE LAST DAY OF HIS STAY THE AMBASSADOR HOSTED A LUNCHEON FOR ROSENTHAL WHICH BROUGHT TOGETHER THE FIVE KEY LEADERS OF THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY WITH THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR AND DCM AND OUR DCM AND POL. OFFICERS. THE JEWISH LEADERS SOMEWHAT GUARDEDLY GAVE THEIR VIEW OF THE URUGUAYAN SITUATION, OBSERVING THAT THERE WAS NO APPARENT ANTI-SEMITISM HERE AND THAT THEY HOPED THIS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE CASE. THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR, WHOSE HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACHES HAVE LARGELY BEEN LIMITED TO ISRAELI CITIZEN CASES, REMAINED SILENT DURING A DISCUSSION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS, URGING THE GOU TO MAKE POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS, BUT HE MAY HAVE GOTTEN THE MESSAGE. (COMMENT: THE OCCASION WAS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH LINKS AMONG THOSE PRESENT AND TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS OF MUTUAL CONCERN. END COMMENT.)

7. ROSENTHAL ALSO MET FOR ALMOST TWO HOURS WITH A LARGE GROUP OF MISSION STAFF FROM ALL AGENCIES. HE GAVE AN EXCELLENT BRIEFING ON THE ACTIVITIES AND CONCERNS OF THE ADL AND OTHER PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD AND ANSWERED NUMEROUS QUESTIONS.

8. COMMENT: COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF THE VISIT
HAVE BEEN NOTED ABOVE. IN SUM, ROSENTHAL'S VISIT WAS A
DECIDED PLUS FOR US AND CONTRIBUTED IN MANY WAYS TO OUR OVER-
ALL HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS IN URUGUAY. WE WOULD WELCOME A
RETURN VISIT IN THE FUTURE AND RECOMMEND THAT OTHER POSTS,
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ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE SOUTHERN CONE, CONSIDER TAKING
ADVANTAGE OF THIS EFFECTIVE AND ARTICULATE RESOURCE
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Message Attributes

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